



Columbus Education Association

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January 22, 2002

Chairman Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 2054

Dear Chairman Powell:

As president of the Columbus Education Association, I am constantly reminded of the battle to bridge the digital divide for our students and teachers. Helping to increase high-speed Internet access for students and teachers in rural or urban areas should be one of our top priorities.

A pending merger of EchoStar and Hughes announced on October 28, 2001, will provide significant, tangible benefits to consumers and most importantly children and educators in rural areas. If the merger is approved, the combined entity will have the ability to deliver high-speed Internet access via satellite to virtually any rural resident. The merger will allow EchoStar to provide meaningful competition with cable and telephone companies as a virtual third line into the home for a bundle of video/data/Internet services.

Competitively priced, high-speed Internet access via satellite will particularly benefit those in rural areas, especially businesses and schools that do not have access to cable modem service or DSL. The merger will also help bridge the digital divide without the need for government loans that are currently being requested by various cable and telephone providers.

For these reasons, the Columbus Education Association believes that the proposed merger is good for students and educators. I hope you will join local leaders across the country in supporting the EchoStar/Hughes merger to help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural residents.

Sincerely,

John Grossman
President
Columbus Education Association

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